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UNCLAS ALMATY 003147

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CACEN (MUDGE), EUR/RUS (NOLL), EUR/PGI (AYU), OES/IHA (COMELLA AND SINGER), OES/STC, NP/PTR (CAMERON), EB/TPP/ATP, EB/TPP/BTA AND INR/REA
STATE PLEASE PASS TO USAID FOR GH/RCS/EE/ROSENBERG
USDA FAS FOR ITP FOR MACKE/THOMAS, CMP/DLP WETZEL
FAS PLEASE PASS TO APHIS AND FSIS
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CDC FOR SBLOUNT, EMCCRAY
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TASHKENT FOR ESTH
DTRA FOR CTB

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: EAGR TBIO ECON RS ETRD PGOV KZ POLITICAL
SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE, AUGUST 26

REF: (A) ALMATY 2842

- (B) ALMATY 2904
- (C) ALMATY 2957
- (D) ALMATY 3085
- (E) ALMATY 3091
- (F) STATE 153802

¶1. (SBU) Summary: This cable supplements Refs A-E and responds to the directive in paragraph 5 of Reft F. No/no further reports of bird deaths, suspected AI, or human contraction of AI have been made since August 15. GOK authorities appear optimistic that they have succeeded in containing the cases they have discovered. In the course of delivering Ref F demarche, GOK officials provided Embassy officers with greater insight into their approach to the epidemic. End Summary.

National Preparedness Plan in Place

¶2. (SBU) Dr. Asylbek Kozhumratov, the Chairman of the Veterinary Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture, told A/DCM and Econoff that he was "optimistic" about the short-term outlook. He claimed that no cases of AI had been registered on small farms since July 27 and no cases of mass bird deaths had been reported since August 15. He put the number of birds destroyed to prevent the spread of AI at 13,430 nationwide.

¶3. (SBU) When A/DCM referred to the need for national preparedness plans, Kozhumratov explained that the GOK had prepared one, and later provided the 15-page document to the Embassy. Kozhumratov said that he felt the plan was good but still too general. He hoped to get more specific information about the Republic of Korea's detailed plan to contain AI. (Note: We have informally contacted the ROK Embassy in Almaty to convey this request for information. End Note.) He was also concerned with vaccination - about the existence and effectiveness of vaccines, and how soon after vaccinating flocks can poultry and eggs be exported.

¶4. (SBU) The existence of the August 2005 national preparedness plan demonstrates an organized GOK approach to the problem. It addresses a very broad range of circumstances, but appears to lack specifics. The plan identifies the autumn and winter as much more risky times for an outbreak, given bird migratory patterns and the likelihood of similar viruses being in circulation among humans and swine. The plan describes in general terms the immediate and controlling actions to be taken as an outbreak occurs.

¶5. (SBU) In its "conclusions" section, the plan dwells on possibilities for vaccination and drug therapy, and is ultimately pessimistic. The plan's authors discount the idea of vaccinating flocks, at least once the virus is suspected, because of the rapid spread of the virus. They are more optimistic about the use of Tamiflu to treat

affected humans should there be suspected cases of human infection, but believe the possibility of a Tamiflu-resistant strain developing quickly to be high. The plan underscores the necessity of quickly determining the clinical value of two Russian drugs, "Arbidol" and "Deytiforin." The plan also calls for the upgrade of facilities at the National Center for Monitoring, Reference, Laboratory Diagnostics and Veterinary Methodology so that

the facility can handle the most virulent influenza strains.

16. (SBU) Note: The named Center is slated to receive CTR-funded laboratory upgrades under the CTR-funded Biological Weapons Prevention Program (BWPP.) However, it is not one of the facilities that the U.S. and Kazakhstan agreed would be used for storage of the most dangerous pathogens (Level I and II in the Russian nomenclature). In December 2004 Kazakhstan agreed to consolidate especially dangerous pathogens at two different laboratories, one belonging to the Ministry of Health and the other to the Ministry of Education and Science. End note.

Ministry Concerned About Autumn Migration

17. (SBU) Embassy officers also met with the chairman of the GOK's interagency coordinating committee for AI, First Deputy Minister of Emergency Situations Nurakhmet Bizhanov. Bizhanov summarized the GOK's actions to date:

-Establishment of the coordinating committee under the Ministry of Emergency Situations with representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Environmental Protection, Interior, Transportation and Communications, Finance (Customs Committee) and the KNB (Border Guards). This structure is duplicated on the oblast level, and in many cases on the sub-oblast (rayon) level.

-Public outreach: over 11,000 gatherings in agricultural communities, 183 training sessions, 145 TV spots, 128 radio spots, 178 newspaper articles and 18,000 leaflets distributed.

-Sanitation and Prophylaxis: Quarantines and transportation bans in affected oblasts, over 13,000 birds culled from flocks, 289 sanitary/veterinary teams from the Ministries of Health and Agriculture at work, and surveillance of over 13,000 lakes, ponds and rivers for signs of dead or diseased fowl.

18. (SBU) Bizhanov also indicated that he met WHO officials immediately before meeting the Embassy officers. He said that he had requested information from WHO on the approaches taken by other countries to address AI.

19. (SBU) While acknowledging the seriousness of the problem, Bizhanov noted that the scale of Kazakhstan's outbreaks was much smaller than that of Russia's. He echoed the Agriculture Ministry's concerns about the country's

vulnerability to another outbreak during the autumn migration season, and about the risk of a mutation that would enable AI to infect swine, thus making transmission to humans easier.

110. (U) Dushanbe Minimize considered.

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